

How has Addison depicted the 18th-century social picture

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Discuss "The Coverley Papers" as the precursor of the English novel. Or, How has Addison depicted the 18th-century social picture in "The Coverley Papers?"

In "The Coverley Papers," Joseph Addison (1672-1719) presents a vivid and insightful depiction of 18th-century English society. This collection of essays, written primarily by Addison and his collaborator Richard Steele (1671-1729), was published in the early 1700s in the periodical "The Spectator." These essays are often regarded as precursors to the English novel as they offer a blend of character development, narrative structure, and social commentary that laid the groundwork for the novelistic.

Through the character of Sir Roger de Coverley and his interactions with various members of society, Addison paints a detailed picture of the social landscape of the time.

The Traditional English Gentry: Addison uses Sir Roger de Coverley, a generous and somewhat eccentric country squire, to represent the traditional English gentry. Sir Roger is a kind-hearted, honorable man who embodies the values of rural life and the old aristocracy. His behavior, manners, and attitudes reflect the virtues and shortcomings of the landowner gentry. He is shown as benevolent to his tenants and servants. Sir Roger's character highlights the few good men of Addison's time, who loved the lower classes. However, his old-fashioned ways and occasional naivety also shed light on the resistance to change and modernization that characterized much of the rural gentry.

Different Facets of Society: In describing the members of the Spectator Club, Addison introduces characters who represent various facets of society. **Sir Roger de Coverley**, a country squire, epitomizes the rural gentry. Sir Roger is known for his old-fashioned but benevolent ways. **The Templar** is a learned and studious young lawyer. **Sir Andrew Freeport** is a wealthy and industrious merchant, representing the rising commercial class. **Captain Sentry** is a brave and experienced soldier. **Will Honeycomb** is a fashionable and witty gentleman. He represents social skills and knowledge of contemporary urban life and trends. **The Clergyman** is a learned and pious member of the clergy, representing society's moral and religious aspects.

Social Institutions and Practices: Addison delves into various social institutions and practices of the time. In "Sir Roger at Church," through Sir Roger's attendance at church and involvement in the church's welfare, Addison sheds light on the religious institutions and practices in 18th-century society. Sir Roger beautifies the church's interior at his own expense -

My friend Sir Roger, being a good church-man, ...he has likewise given a handsome pulpit-cloth, and railed in the communion-table at his own expense.

Sir Roger also gives every parishioner a prayer book and a hassock for kneeling, ensuring that everyone can participate fully in the service.

Humor and Human Follies: Addison uses humor to critique social norms and behaviors. Through gentle mockery and ironic observations, he exposes the follies of society. For instance, in "**Sir Roger at Church**," Sir Roger's behavior at church is described humorously. While he sometimes nods off during the sermon, he quickly recovers and checks if anyone else is sleeping. As Addison writes about Sir Roger-

and if he sees anybody else nodding, either wakes them himself, or sends his servant to them.

Addison also used humor to address contemporary issues, such as the vanity of fashion, the pretensions of the emerging middle class, and the oddities of human nature.

Love and Marriage: In "The Coverley Papers," Addison also addresses the themes of love and marriage, mainly through Sir Roger's unrequited love for a widow. This chapter provides insight into the social conventions and expectations surrounding courtship and marriage during the period.

Rural and Urban Life: When Sir Roger visits London, Addison contrasts rural and urban life. Sir Roger's visit highlights the differences in lifestyle and social interactions. London is depicted as a place of opportunity and progress but also one of vice and moral ambiguity.

To wrap up, Addison's "The Coverley Papers" offers a rich tapestry of 18th-century English society. His insightful and often humorous depiction gives readers a window into his contemporary world's dynamics.